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FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1036
INFO CIS COLLECTIVE
NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0199
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 0249
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 001027

SIPDIS
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

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SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: UNICEF MAY SEEK TO DISTANCE ITSELF FROM
GOVERNMENT

CLASSIFIED BY: Timothy P. Buckley, Second Secretary, Department of
State, Political and Economic Section; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

11. (C) On June 17, Matthew Taylor, the Public Relations
Officer at UNICEF's Uzbekistan office, told poloff that the
organization will be "changing tack" to take a harder line in its
dealings with the Government of Uzbekistan. Taylor said that a
coalition of NGOs, led by Human Rights Watch, recently approached
UNICEF's Deputy Regional Director and the Director of
Communications. The groups leveled criticism at UNICEF and said
the organization could increasingly be seen "as part of the
problem, rather than the solution," according to Taylor. The NGO
coalition further claimed that the "UNICEF brand was being used as
a public relations umbrella" by the Uzbek government, which Taylor
said caused concern in the organization.

12. (C) As a response, UNICEF has drafted a statement that
will seek to "distance itself" from the Uzbek government and
indicate a tougher approach. Taylor promised that we would be kept
informed about the timetable for release of the statement as well
as any expected follow up policy actions. On June 15, UNICEF
Country Representative Mahboob Shareef told poloff at a reception
that "the next few months will be critical" in convincing the
government to instruct regional hokims (governors) to keep children
out of the agricultural fields during the upcoming cotton harvest
season.

Comment:

13. (C) For anyone to call UNICEF here "part of the problem"
is incorrect and highly unfair to its committed, capable staff.
Poloff noted to Taylor that we listed the need for close
collaboration with UNICEF in the 2009 TIP Report. We believe that
international organizations on the ground are best-suited to make
progress in encouraging the Uzbek government to alter the
long-standing agricultural practices it inherited from the Soviet
Union. The government will certainly be upset if UNICEF shifts to
a more hard-line approach in its relations, so we will have to be

ready to redouble our efforts to encourage the Uzbeks to maintain collaboration. A statement from UNICEF could actually help facilitate an invitation to the International Labor Organization (ILO) if the Government of Uzbekistan senses it could dull the criticism, but we will have to be careful that engagement with ILO does not come at the expense of engagement with UNICEF since we view both as having an important role.

NORLAND